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Voluntary - Public

Date: 2/19/2010

GAIN Report Number: IT1012

Italy

Post: Rome

Italy's Ministry of Agriculture and the McItaly Controversy

Report Categories:

Agriculture in the News

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Report Highlights:

Minister of Agriculture Zaia's featured participation in McDonald's promotion of a new McItaly menu has created a controversy in Italy. One reason for the controversy is the promotion was launched at McDonald's flagship Italian location which opened in 1986 near the Spanish Steps. The Slow Food Movement, which among other things promotes local and traditional foods, was developed in reaction to the opening of this McDonald's restaurant. Given this significance, critics believe Zaia has 'sold out' to the multinationals.

General Information:

Italy's Ministry of Agriculture and the McItaly Controversy

Minister of Agriculture Zaia's featured participation in McDonald's promotion of a new McItaly menu has created a controversy in Italy. One reason for the controversy is the promotion was launched at McDonald's flagship Italian location which opened in 1986 near the Spanish Steps. The Slow Food Movement, which among other

things promotes local and traditional foods, was developed in reaction to the opening of this McDonald's restaurant. Given this significance, critics believe Zaia has 'sold out' to the multinationals. Zaia, however, claims the McItaly menu will benefit Italian farmers. Critics counter that McDonald's currently sources most, if not all, of its inputs locally, so the benefits are likely to be small, if any.

This controversy is occurring simultaneously with another more serious debate in which the Council of State recently ruled in favor of Futuragra, the pro-biotech farmers' association that brought the Ministry of Agriculture to court over its ban on the cultivation of biotech crops in Italy. Observers fear the Ministry may defy the ruling and maintain its' prohibition on biotech crops. Should this occur, Futuragra has pledged to file a class-action lawsuit demanding compensation for losses due to pest damage that the use of biotechnology could prevent. Futuragra estimates these losses at €400 per hectare annually. Depending on the calculation, total losses to farmers' incomes could be as much as nearly €342.9 million annually—far more than the benefits of the McItaly menu (see IT1011 and IT1008 for more information).

The central issue to the debate is whether Italy's Ministry of Agriculture will address and deal effectively with systemic production and market inefficiencies to the benefit of both Italian farmers and consumers, or simply become a Ministry of Culinary Affairs that focuses on marketing the image of Italian food products and culinary traditions.

For more information on the McItaly controversy:

http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/35301534/ns/business-world_business/

For an example of negative opinions about Minister Zaia's decision and his response to the criticism:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2010/jan/28/mcdonalds-launch-mcitaly-burger>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/wordofmouth/2010/jan/28/mcdonalds-launch-mcitaly-burger?showallcomments=true#CommentKey:d98f1431-b950-4f22-bb51-d6baf94eb301>